

**WATER 2025 DENVER CONFERENCE**  
**DENVER, COLORADO**  
**JUNE 6, 2003**

**CLOSING REMARKS BY**  
**COMMISSIONER JOHN W. KEYS III**

Thank you for attending this important and timely Conference. We have had quite a day.

Just to put an exclamation point on the seriousness of this current drought, today Lake Mead's level is at 1144 ft. The last time Lake Mead was this low was August 1969... a month after Neil Armstrong stepped foot on the moon!

Having the Governor of Colorado, the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture, Senator [Ben] Campbell and Congressman [Mark] Udall, the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources, and the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science join some of the most respected and experienced tribal, state and local water and environmental leaders all in the same room talking about Water 2025 -- this shows just how serious we all are about making a difference in the future on these critical water problems in the West.

Secretary Norton told us why Water 2025 came about and she gave us details of the five realities and the four tools available to prevent and minimize future conflicts over water in the West.

She stated that doing nothing is an option only if we are prepared for the consequences, which to me are simply unacceptable.

Secretary Veneman and the USDA fully support Water 2025 and stand ready to coordinate with Interior on helping people, farms and the environment meet the water challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Secretary Veneman stated that Water 2025 is consistent with providing the food, fiber and energy security to the West and to the Nation, empowering people to deal with contentious issues at the local level.

Under Secretary Mark Rey stated that USDA programs were designed to help farmers manage water more efficiently and provide conservation benefits to the environment.

We need feedback on how we can better integrate federal programs through interagency coordination.

The panel on state and local perspectives provided important comments on Water 2025. While they were supportive of the concepts of Water 2025, they want Interior to "get its house in order" by speaking with one voice on natural resource issues.

Issues like completing adjudications, recognizing specific local limitations to the four tools, and improving and building new water storage facilities were discussed as important issues to be addressed.

States don't want to be "saved" from these problems; they simply need help with these issues. Many states are moving forward with long-term solutions and want the federal government with them along the way.

The panel on "Approaches to Resolving Conflict" highlighted water banks, collaborative approaches, and the importance of the use of new water management technologies in actually resolving conflict at the local level.

The West is home to many working rivers, and habitat is becoming hard to find for many species that exist in the West -- including *homo sapiens*.

Finally, the panel on "Getting Beyond Crisis Management" proved that it will be very difficult to get beyond trying to manage crises until all affected parties can come together, work out differences or find common ground in order to effectively deal with contentious and complex issues over water.

Water 2025 represents a philosophy whose time has come. Secretary Norton reminded us this morning about her 4 C's, and Water 2025 will put them to work on Western water issues.

**Today, Water 2025 is just words, ideas, and goals.**

**Tomorrow, Water 2025 is about action and results.**

Using what we have learned here today, the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary and I are committed to turning Water 2025 into the reality of tomorrow. We don't have all of the answers. But we have the technical expertise to help; we have the will to work at collaboration; and we have the future at stake.

With your help, we can use the vision of Water 2025 in addressing the challenges we all face, especially in the critical areas of the West where crises and conflict over water can be predicted and prevented.

We look forward to seeing Water 2025 philosophies show up in many places: in Interior programs and budgets; in Congress; in your states; and in resolving your specific issues.

So, where do we go from here?

Interior's and Reclamation's next steps will include:

- Eight regional consulting sessions – beginning with Phoenix on July 8, then Las Vegas on July 9, Sacramento on July 10, Salt Lake City on July 16, Boise on July 17, Billings on July 29, Albuquerque on August 12, and ending with Austin on August 14. We plan on having more interactive sessions at the regional meetings that will help us hear the grassroots comments that will build the broad base of support necessary for Water 2025 to succeed.
- A report to the Secretary based on your input at those sessions.
- Preparation of an action plan.

- We are currently developing a list of pilot projects to implement in FY04.
- We will continue to update our website with the latest news on Water 2025

The debate over preventing crises and conflict over water in the West has begun, and we will help facilitate the discussion.

The Secretary mentioned that tribal, state and local communities should take the lead in developing solutions to water problems, and we will be looking to you as the leaders of this effort to help us direct scarce federal resources on the critical areas of the West.

***We still want to hear from you*** – through cards, letters, our web site, by phone calls to any or all of us... regional directors, area managers, Washington and Denver offices.

In closing this Conference, it is important that we take home one final message: Water 2025 is not new, but it does represent a new philosophy, one that is focused on reshaping and enhancing the tools that will work to prevent crises and conflict over water in the West.